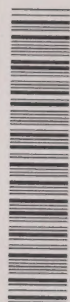


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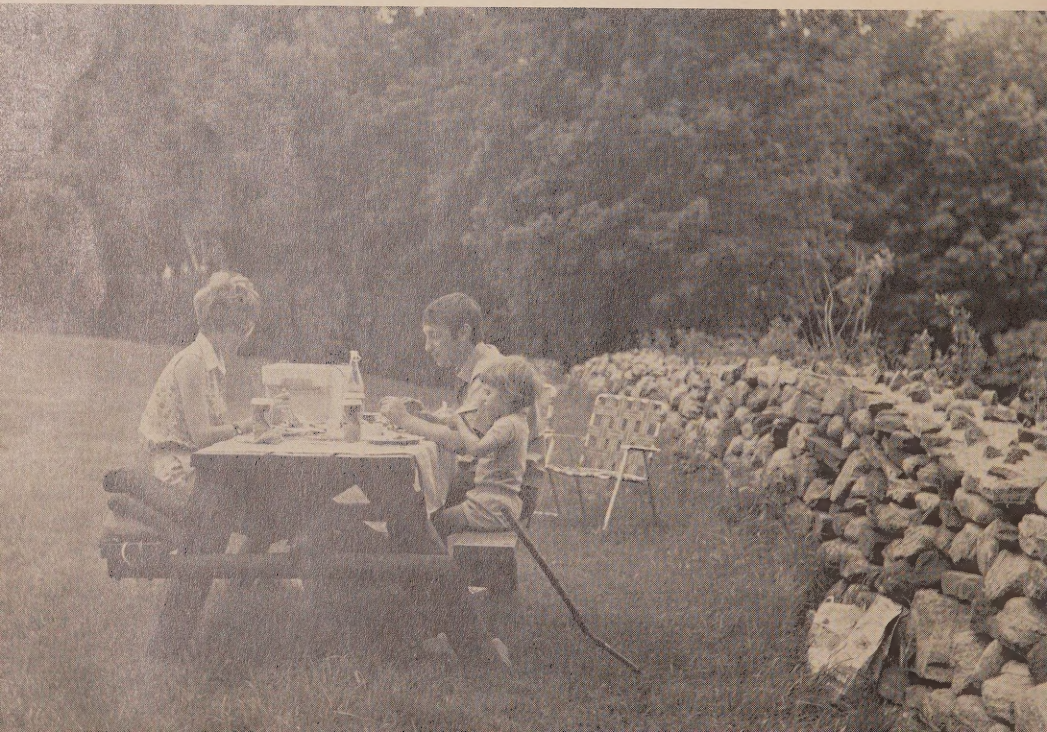
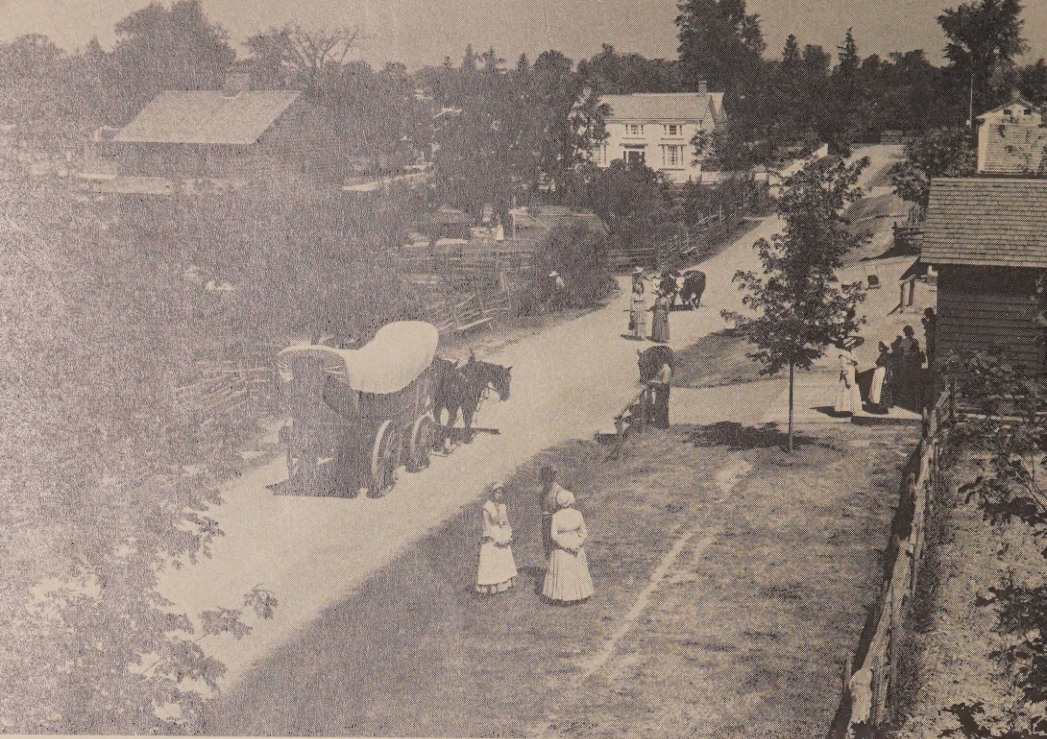
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Ontario's Conservation Authorities



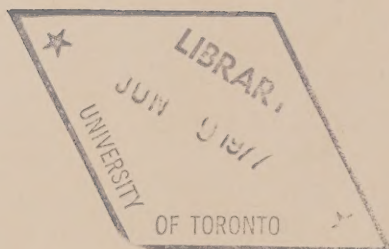


*Black Creek Pioneer
Village which keeps
up old ways and old
crafts, Toronto.*

CALON
ER GO
Publications
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Ontario's Conservation Authorities

*Natural picnic spot
near open uplands
and enticing paths
in wooded ravines.*



Ontario

Ministry of
Natural
Resources

Hon. Frank S. Miller
Minister

Dr. J.K. Reynolds
Deputy Minister

*Fanshawe Dam on the
Thames River, the
first Conservation
Authority dam, 1954.*

Ontario's Conservation Authorities

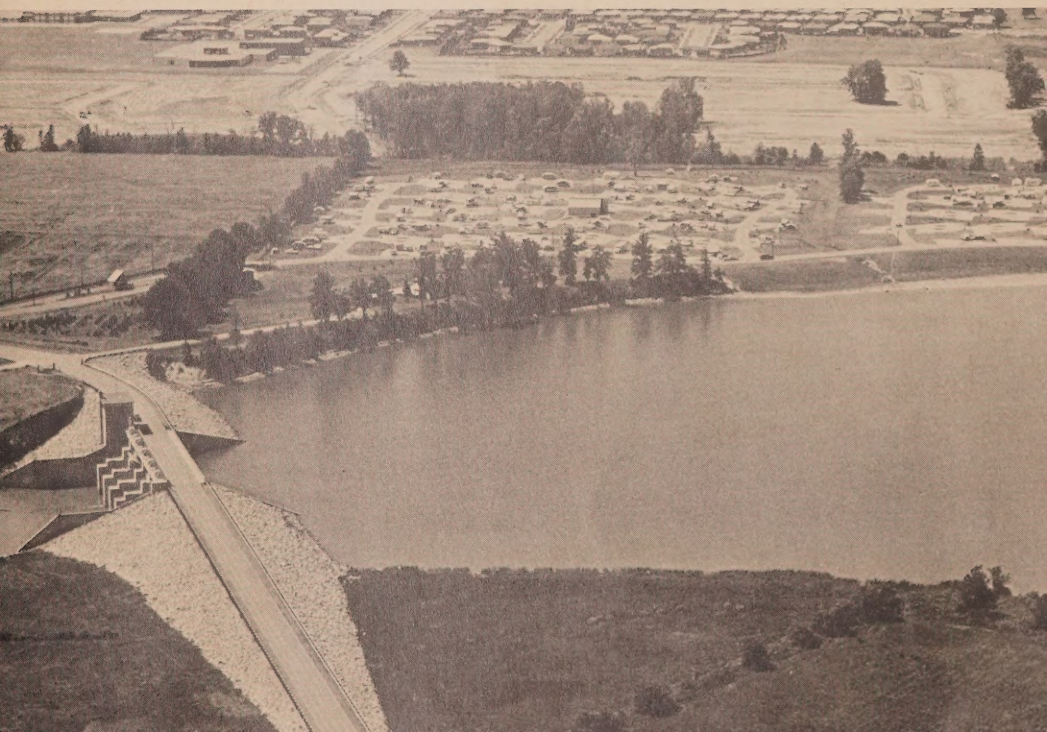
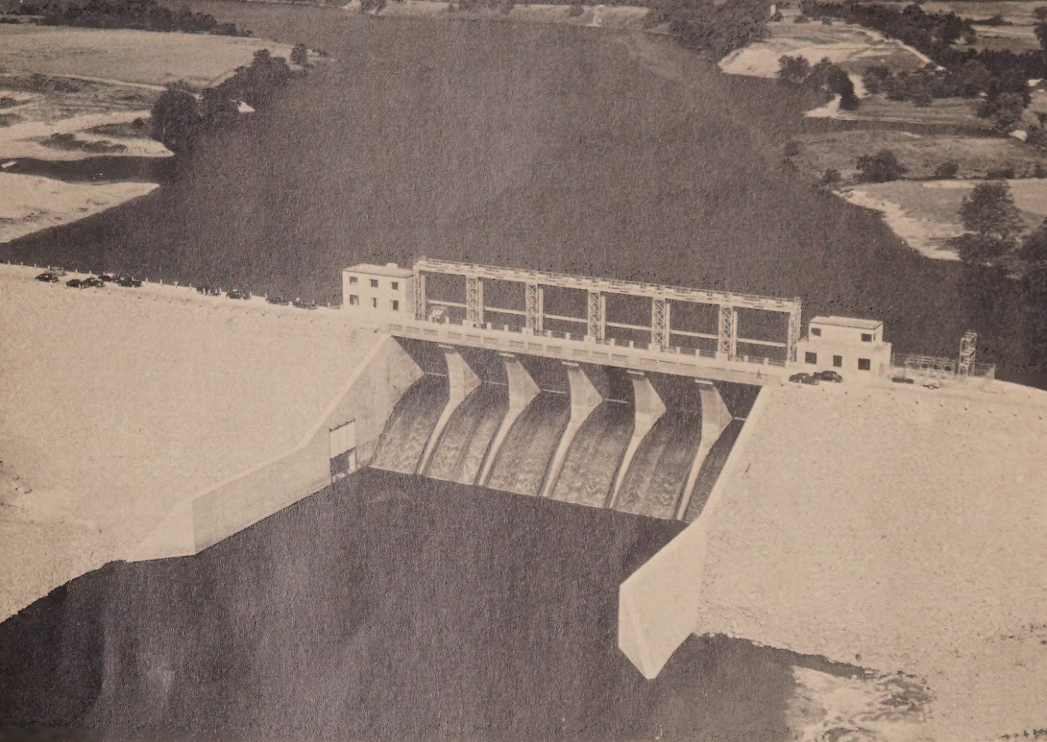
TO many people in Ontario, conservation authorities are the organizations that make possible their summer picnic trips or provide the best local tobogganing hills. But conservation authorities do much, much more. From protecting the habitats of endangered species to reducing a flood threat, their work is vital to both wild and human life in the Province.

Water management has always been the foremost concern of most conservation authorities. More than half of the authorities were formed as a result of flooding. Floods caused by spring break-ups and ice jams have periodically threatened Ontario communities since the early days of settlement. Many towns have been founded along rivers and have expanded into their flood plains. Often the main street is located next to the river itself, as in Cambridge, Port Hope and Mitchell. In May, 1974, homes and businesses in Cambridge, Paris and Brantford were severely damaged when a storm caused the Grand River to flood its banks.

In October, 1954, Hurricane Hazel swept into southern Ontario, killing 81 people and causing \$25 million damage, mainly in Metropolitan Toronto. It was the worst hurricane-type storm to hit Ontario in recent times. However, other less extensive storms have also taken lives and damaged property. A mother and four children died in Timmins on Labour Day weekend, 1961, when a storm dumped eight inches of rain on that northern Ontario town in 12 hours.

These examples emphasize the need for water management and flood control by conservation authorities. A number of large dams have been built by the authorities, primarily for flood protection. The first was the Fanshawe Dam, completed in 1954 to help protect the City of London. The Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority has built the Claireville Dam on the west branch of the Humber and the G. Ross Lord Dam on the Don River. Dams, channelization of streams and other engineered structures, together with flood plain management and watershed conservation programs, provide comprehensive water control.

*Claireville dam and
reservoir, the first
large flood-control
construction in
Metro Toronto.*



Flood Control

It has become obvious that the use of flood plains can be best controlled under public ownership. For this reason, many conservation authorities have set out to acquire flood plains and valley lands, especially in urban areas such as Metropolitan Toronto. These valley areas make ideal parkland in many communities. In fact, most of the 8,000 acres making up Metropolitan Toronto's parks system are found in the valleys of the Etobicoke, Humber, Don, Duffin, Highland and Rouge Rivers.

Since not all of Ontario's flood plains can be publicly owned, the authorities have the power to control them through regulations. To do this, flood lines are calculated for each watershed, based either on the flood level from an actual storm, such as Hurricane Hazel, or on estimated flood levels. Though there may be some difference of opinion on where to put the flood lines, flood plain regulations have been applied successfully in many areas.

Local Initiative

The desire to control and preserve our environment is not a new idea in Ontario. Years ago, many concerned citizens realized that conservation of natural resources should not simply be left to senior levels of government to manage. It seemed appropriate that the residents of the communities served by the rivers, streams and forests should take part in their management.

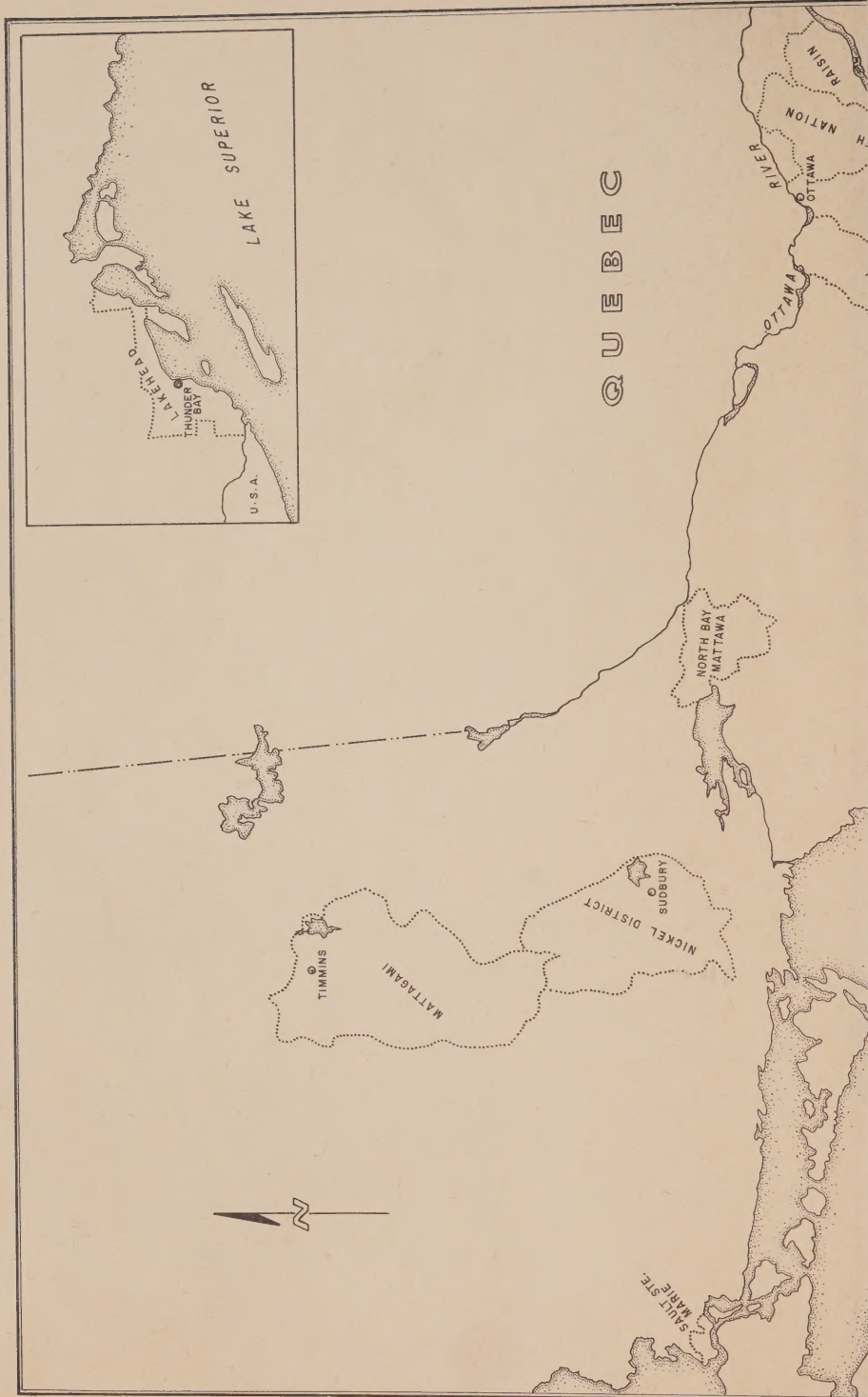
This thinking led to The Conservation Authorities Act, 1946, which established the framework for the conservation authority system. Under this Act, the initiative and sense of responsibility of local residents combined with the technical and financial resources of senior levels of government to protect and develop the watersheds of Ontario.

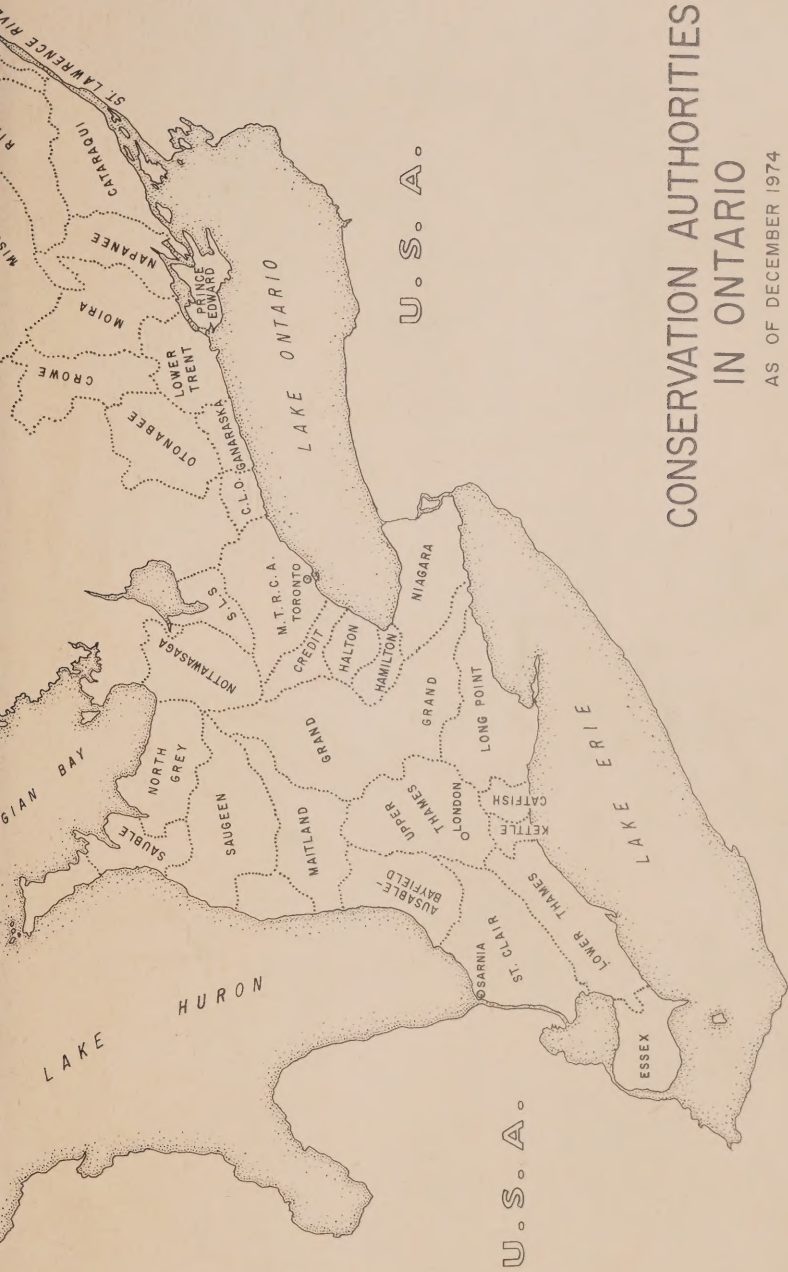
To form a conservation authority, the first move must come from the community. Once the majority of municipalities in a watershed have voted in favor of establishing a local conservation authority and the province confirms the decision with an order-in-council, the authority is set up. It may govern a single watershed, such as that of the Grand River system, or a number of smaller and adjacent watersheds such as the Cataraqui Region. In each case, every municipality within the

Cambridge on May 17, 1974, when the Grand River overflowed its banks.

"A Grand Experience" puts kids and adults on snowshoes at Grand River Conservation Authority.

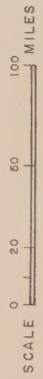






CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES IN ONTARIO

AS OF DECEMBER 1974



watershed or region becomes a member of the authority and must appoint one or more members to it. The Province appoints three members to each authority.

Since the conservation authorities are so closely tied to their local communities, they have proved to be an effective forum for discussion of local and regional priorities. It's the Province's job to ensure that conservation programs conform to provincial resource policies and budgets.

Once it is set up, an authority may not be dissolved, nor can any municipality opt out. Each authority is an autonomous corporate body that initiates and carries out projects. There are 38 conservation authorities in the Province, covering 41,000 square miles and 478 municipalities—including most of Ontario south of the Laurentian Shield and five areas in northern Ontario.

Provincial Aids

Conservation authority programs are partially financed by the province. Once a project is approved by the Minister of Natural Resources, the province may pay 50 per cent of the cost. However, there are some exceptions and the grant may be as much as 75 per cent. In some water management projects, the federal government may also participate.

In addition to financial aid, the Ministry provides technical help in the form of a working plan for each conservation authority. The Conservation Authorities Branch surveys the existing renewable resources and studies the history, land use, forestry, water, wildlife and outdoor recreation in the area. Then it presents a report outlining the major problems and recommending conservation measures to the authority. Guided by local needs, the authority then proceeds at its own speed to decide which projects will be undertaken and how they will be financed by the municipalities.

Preserving the Past

An important part of the Ministry's conservation report is the history section. These sections have been widely read and have helped to stimulate public interest in local history. Some conservation authorities have been able to acquire and preserve historical sites and buildings such as the O'Hara saw mill built near Madoc about 1846; it is now owned by the Moira River Con-

*"Let me hold him."
Education programs
bring children close
to nature.*

*Attentive audience
on nature trail in
conservation area.*



servation Authority. The Long Point Region Conservation Authority has restored a grist mill near Long Point and renovated nearby Backus House, now headquarters for the Long Point Bird Observatory.

Perhaps the best known historical projects of the conservation authorities are the pioneer villages. The largest and most ambitious is Black Creek Pioneer Village, developed by the Metropolitan Toronto and Region Conservation Authority in the northwest part of the city. It depicts a pre-confederation crossroads community.

London's pioneer village in Fanshawe Park, a project of the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, is typical of southwestern Ontario villages around 1830. The site of the Doon Pioneer Village in Doon Conservation Area was provided by the Grand River Conservation Authority. The village, itself, was financed by the Ontario Pioneer Community Foundation of Waterloo County. Ska-nah-doht (a village stands again) is a reconstructed Indian village developed by the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority.

While water management, preservation of the past and resource conservation objectives are important, the authorities have not overlooked recreation. Far from it—there are some 320 conservation areas in the Province, ranging in size from several acres to several thousand acres. They offer swimming, camping, picnicking and fishing as well as winter sports such as skating, cross-country and down-hill skiing, and snowmobiling. Some areas are open to hunters while others are geared to activities such as bird watching. Most of these areas have been acquired for water management purposes, but many have been purchased for forest and wildlife management and conservation of unique natural features.

Public Aids

The Niagara Escarpment is a prime example of a part of Ontario that eight conservation authorities have co-operated to preserve. The province has encouraged conservation authorities to acquire land along the escarpment with a policy of 75 per cent grants for land purchases.

Private groups have done their part, too. Organizations such as the Nature Conservancy of Canada, the

Canadian National Sportsmen's Show and the Bruce Trail Association have aided land acquisition across the Province by donating funds which are matched or bettered by provincial grants. Several authorities work with the Ontario Heritage Foundation, managing properties received by that group.

Students, too, have made important contributions. The Hamilton Region Conservation Authority has been helped by students in several Ancaster, Dundas and Hamilton schools. With more than \$38,000 raised by the Student's Park Fund, plus provincial grants, the authority has bought 152 acres in the Dundas Valley.

With increasing public concern about the quality of the environment, the demand for information about the natural world has grown tremendously. To meet that demand, most conservation authorities have set up outdoor education facilities. In fact, the authorities have been pioneers in these programs.

Outstanding examples of residential facilities are the Albion Hills, Boyd and Claremont Conservation Field Centres in the Metropolitan Toronto Conservation Authority. School classes and other groups come to these centres throughout the year for periods of a week-end or a school week. Taguanyah in the Grand, the Mountsberg Wildlife Centre in the Halton and Foley Mountain Centre in the Rideau, are examples of some of the day-use conservation education centres operated by many authorities. Educational co-ordinators and instructors are often on staff to assist teachers and students.

Resource Management

When it comes to wildlife resources, conservation authorities have shown great interest. Many authorities have established fish and wildlife advisory boards and they have several fish and wildlife conservation areas for low-intensity recreation. Streams on flood plain lands are available to the public, both for warm-water and trout fishing. Some are stocked by the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Luther Marsh is an excellent waterfowl hunting spot. Many years ago the area had been cleared and drained for agriculture but was later abandoned. The land was purchased by the Grand River Conservation Authority as a water conservation and wildlife management area.

It is managed jointly by the Authority and the Cambridge District of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

The soil of Ontario must be carefully managed as part of watershed protection. Since the use and management of soil is primarily the responsibility of the land owner, conservation authorities work with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, agricultural schools and related organizations on soil conservation projects. The county agricultural representative is often a member of an authority's land use advisory board.

A primary concern is erosion control because stream bank erosion is one of the causes of water pollution. The authorities and the ministry work with land owners in erosion control measures such as grass waterways and streambank stabilization.

One of the earliest concerns of conservation authorities was forest management. As long ago as 1946, land was being bought for forest management by the Ganaraska and Ausable Valley Conservation Authorities. At the present time, 23 authorities own and manage 90,000 acres of forest, under agreements with the Ministry of Natural Resources. This total does not include the forested land managed for other purposes such as wildlife habitat.

From its beginning, the catalyst of the conservation authority system has been local initiative and enthusiasm. How successful has it been? Well, in 1975, 4,250,806 people visited the authorities' conservation areas, and \$56,620,101 was expended on authority projects and programs.

Behind the statistics stand the more than 900 authority members who have made the conservation authority system dynamic and effective. These dedicated individuals will ensure its bright future.

*For further information
apply to:*

*Director,
Conservation Authorities Branch
Ministry of Natural Resources
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1W3*

*O'Hara Mill of 1846,
restored by Moira
River Conservation
Authority near Madoc.
It still has a muley
saw in operation.*

*Sun, sand and safe
swimming draw many
many visitors to
conservation areas.*

*You gotta have Heart
Lake (back cover),
Metropolitan Toronto
& Region Conservation
Authority.*



